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Federal Communications Commission

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Washington, D. C. 20554

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AUTHORIZES BELL SOUTH TO PROVIDE LONG DISTANCE SERVICE IN FIVE STATES

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that it voted to approve BellSouth's multi-state application to provide in-region, interLATA service originating in the following five states: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Approval of BellSouth's multi-state application promises substantial benefits for the states' consumers in the form of enhanced competition in both the local and long distance markets.

According to BellSouth, competitive local exchange carriers (competitive LECs) provide facilities-based local service to some 202,149 lines in Alabama, 93,252 lines in Kentucky, 84,637 lines in Mississippi, 353,542 lines in North Carolina, and 143,471 lines in South Carolina. In addition, BellSouth states that competitive LECs have gained double-digit market share in Alabama (11.9 percent), North Carolina (13.4 percent), and South Carolina (11.8 percent), and have gained nearly as much market share in Mississippi (8.4 percent) and Kentucky (8.4 percent).

With the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (1996 Act), Congress envisioned fundamental, pro-competitive changes in the telecommunications markets by making a Bell Operating Company's (BOC) entry into the long distance market subject to the BOC first opening its local service monopoly to competition. A BOC satisfies this contingency by demonstrating compliance with section 271 of the 1996 Act. After a BOC files a section 271 long distance application with the FCC, the FCC has 90 days to determine whether a BOC has taken the statutorily required steps to open its local telecommunications markets to competition, including compliance with the 1996 Act's section 271 14-point "competitive checklist."

Since the passage of the 1996 Act, the FCC has denied five long distance applications and now has approved applications to provide in-region, long distance service in 20 states. Additionally, applications for 16 states have been withdrawn. Currently, there are section 271 applications for three states – Verizon's joint application for New Hampshire and Delaware and Verizon's Virginia application – pending before the Commission. A summary of all section 271 applications can be accessed at the following FCC web page:

www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Common_Carrier/in-region_applications/

-- more --

The FCC emphasizes that BellSouth must continue to comply with the section 271 checklist requirements, and the Commission has a number of enforcement tools at its disposal to ensure compliance, including imposing penalties or suspension of approval.

-FCC-

Docket No.: WC 02-150

Action by the Commission September 18, 2002, by Report and Order (FCC 02-260). Chairman Powell and Commissioners Abernathy, Copps, and Martin; with Commissioner Copps issuing a separate statement.

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News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found on the Commission's web site www.fcc.gov.